



San Bernardino Sun

State Funds Fight Looms: Cal State system braces for trims

By Mark Petix
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Ten percent cuts across the board. Early release for thousands of prisoners. Reduced public services, closed parks and delayed Medi-Cal payments.

Facing a \$14.5 billion budget gap by June, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed cuts that would dramatically impact the Inland Empire, affecting everything from adult day care to the number of open seats at Cal Poly Pomona and Cal State San Bernardino.

Assemblywoman Nell Soto, D-Ontario, said the governor's plan goes too far. She plans to fight it in the Legislature.

"The governor's budget will do permanent damage to California," Soto said. "The cuts will only make the economy worse and cause an unstable future by knocking the air out of public education."

The cuts would hit the California State University system hard.

Cal State system officials say the \$312.9million cut the governor has proposed would cut access for 10,000 students.

Cal State San Bernardino announced Tuesday it will stop accepting applications for first-time freshman enrollment Feb. 1.

"And that's because of the budget," said university spokesman Joe Gutierrez.

The governor's plan would also cut \$36 million from state university programs that include employee health benefits.

Chancellor Charles B. Reed said it would also cut money meant to avoid another round of tuition increases for some 450,000 students.

Cal Poly Pomona spokeswoman Uyen Mai said the budget battle has just begun, and its impacts on the campus are unknown.

"The budget process is long and we really don't know what will happen to individual campuses, so it's really too early to say," she said. "We're sure it will change."

A report released Monday by the state Legislative Analyst's Office finds little to quibble with in the governor's numbers, which it says reflect a troubled economy.

But the office does not approve of his plans, saying not all state programs are equal.

"While the administration's approach of across-the-board reductions has the appeal of fairness, it reflects little effort to prioritize and determine which state programs provide essential services or are most critical for California's future," the report states.

The office recommends making cuts on a case-by-case basis, with legislators thinking hard before approving any of the governor's plans.

This includes his call to trim more than \$2.5 billion by delaying payments to programs that provide Medi-Cal and other health services.

It's much too early to worry about that, said Dave Stienstra, executive director of Inland Christian Home Inc. in Ontario.

The nonprofit home provides health and retirement care for more than 230 people. But if there were delays, it would have an impact.

"Certainly, if we don't get our money for the care we provide to our Medi-Cal residents in a timely manner, it would be a problem," he said. "We have expenses, payroll."

Even if the governor's plan is approved by the Legislature, there is good news on the local park front.

Chino Hills State Park is not on the list of 48 parks the governor would close to save money during the state's budget crisis.

California Citrus State Historic Park in Riverside is the only area park on the list.

Soto is particularly worried about \$8 billion in proposed lower-education cuts.

We cannot continue to cut funding to schools," she said. "Schools in Pomona, Chino, Montclair and Ontario are working hard to meet state and federal performance standards."